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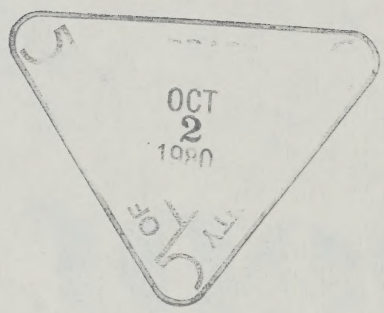
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# About Face

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**towards a  
positive image  
of women  
in advertising**





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1975

# **About Face**

**towards a  
positive image  
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*"For a long time I have been peeved at the way women are exploited in advertising."*

*"In my opinion, almost all TV ads make women appear as fools, interested only in their wash or their breath."*

*"In viewing the ads with a critical eye, the thing that I noticed was that many of the ads, while not exactly discriminating against women, seemed to show that they were slightly moronic. Or they indicated that the people responsible for the ads thought the average I.Q. of women was in the range between idiots and imbeciles!"*

*"I realize 'ad men' believe it doesn't matter if their ads aggravate the buyer so long as they remember the name of the product. 'Taint so!"*

*"Women are humiliated or degraded in the commercials for using the 'wrong' product, then practically patted on the head as a 'good girl' for finally seeing the light and switching to the 'right one'."*

*"Give 'em hell and make them change!"*

The above comments are typical of the attitudes of Ontario women toward the portrayal of women in advertising, according to a survey conducted by the Ontario Status of Women Council. Not all those participating in the survey were as articulate as the women quoted above, but every participant was as emphatic in her views that something is very wrong with the way women are often shown in the ads. The general tone of the response was, *"This is something that has bothered me for ages, but I figured what could I, as one person, do about it? Thank you for giving me the opportunity, at last, to express my views. Maybe if we all get together we can get something changed."*

That is precisely the aim of this report, which summarizes the results of the province-wide study carried out in late 1974 and early 1975. The results will undoubtedly prove uncomfortable for those advertisers who have felt that the issue was a tempest in a teapot. On the other hand, advertisers who have already heeded early rumbles of discontent in this matter, but have been confused as to what is or is not objectionable, will find many clues as to the pitfalls they could avoid. Individual women (and men), will be heartened to learn that they are not alone in their objections to some advertising, and that there is something they can do about it. Whatever the viewpoint, this report cannot be ignored: the dissatisfaction and dismay it expresses are but the tip of the iceberg.



# Order of Contents

Why and how the survey was conducted	1
Where do women find objectionable advertising?	3
Which products are advertised objectionably?	4
What do women find objectionable in advertising?	6
What does all this mean? Council's assessment of the survey results	14
What can you do — as an individual — to eliminate offensive advertising?	16
What can you do — as an advertiser — to eliminate offensive advertising?	18
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>21</b>
Media identified as sources of objectionable advertising (Tables 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)	21
TV and radio programmes on which objectionable advertising identified (Table 10)	25
Products, stores, and services cited as subject of objectionable advertising (Table 11)	26
Invitation to participate in survey (including instructions for monitoring advertising)	28
The advertising monitoring form	29
Locations of respondents	30







## Why and how the survey was conducted

In the course of its work, the Ontario Status of Women Council has received numerous complaints and representations about the 'sexist' and frequently 'degrading' portrayal of women in advertising. Occasionally Council members have contacted or met with offending advertisers to present this viewpoint, sometimes with success, at other times with less-than-satisfactory results. By the spring of 1974 it was decided that an attempt should be made to assess the attitudes of a larger number of Ontario women toward this aspect of advertising in order to encourage advertisers to identify and eliminate anything women might view as objectionable, discriminatory, or offensive from their advertising. At the same time, it was expected that a widespread media-monitoring survey could help make the women of Ontario more conscious of the way women are depicted in advertising, and encourage them to participate in a continuing campaign to remove discrimination by sex from commercial advertising.

In May, 1974, a letter was sent to the approximately 700 organizations and individuals on the Council's mailing list requesting their participation in monitoring the media for advertising offensive to women. Thousands of one-page monitoring forms were distributed throughout the province over the following months to all those responding to Council's invitation to participate. (Samples of the invitation letter and the monitoring form are included in the Appendix to this report.)

The survey was designed not so much to yield statistical data as to provide insight into the sorts of things women find objectionable in advertising and the most common sources and subjects of offensive ads. Thus, the open-ended nature of the key parts of the questionnaire allowed women to express their views in their own words, without forcing them to agree or disagree with particular viewpoints. In fact, in the instructions for filling out the form, respondents were invited to indicate satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction with the way women are portrayed in advertising. But out of the 1,017 forms analyzed for this report, (plus dozens of letters on the issue) only one had anything positive to say about an advertisement. This particular form is reproduced in section VII of this report.

The first 1,017 completed monitoring forms returned to Council were analyzed for this report, which means the survey period covered the last few months in 1974 and the first few months in 1975. Since many respondents submitted more than one form, it is estimated that approximately 500 individuals actually participated in the survey. These participants came from 71 different towns and cities throughout Ontario ranging in size from Wingham and Delhi to Toronto, and in location from Rainy River and Kapuskasing to Cornwall and Ottawa. Indeed, fully 25% of the forms submitted came from centres under 100,000 in population, so the response was by no means limited to large urban centres.

The Ontario Status of Women Council wishes to express its heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation to each and every one of the women who took the time to fill out an advertising monitoring form and send it in. Without the concern and especially the thoughtful consideration of these women, this survey would not have been possible.



## Where do women find objectionable advertising?

The pervasiveness of objectionable advertising is probably the most striking result of this survey. It is not confined to any one city or area (not just to large urban centres, for example), nor to any particular media (although complaints about TV advertising predominate, this may only mean women spend more time watching TV than with other media), nor to any particular programmes or articles in these media. On the contrary, in this survey objectionable advertising was found:

- in 71 different Ontario towns and cities
- on 22 different Ontario TV stations
- in 43 different magazines and newspapers
- in advertising on billboards, handbills, pamphlets, in-store posters, product packages and a variety of other places
- on no fewer than 104 different radio and TV programmes

The precise figures as to where objectionable advertising was identified — and a list of all sources cited — are given in the Appendix. Probably more important than which media or programmes were the most frequently mentioned sources of offensive ads, however, is the total range or breadth of these sources.

## Which products are advertised objectionably?

Once again, the pervasiveness of advertising offensive to women is a most noteworthy result of the survey. The range of products for which objectionable advertising was identified is truly phenomenal: a total of 294 different products (or stores or services) were cited as the subject of objectionable ads. While many of these products were mentioned only a few times each, no fewer than 55 were identified at least five times each, which would indicate that there is some basis for consensus in a considerable number of cases.

The following table shows the 23 products most frequently reported as being the subject of offensive or objectionable advertising. Although none of the percentages is high in absolute terms, even 1% of 1,000 responses means that 10 women independently and spontaneously identified a particular ad as objectionable — a fair degree of consensus, considering that the scope of the survey was virtually limitless with regard to the number of ads which could be assessed.

**Table 1**

**Most frequently cited subjects of objectionable ads**

	%	N = 1016
Milk	4.0	41
Playtex Cross-Your-Heart Bras, 28 Hour Girdle and Body Language Bra	3.3	34
Belvedere Cigarettes	3.1	32
Johnson & Johnson Maxi and Mini Pads	3.0	30
Alpo	2.3	23
Classified Ads	2.2	22
Secret Pantyhose	1.8	18
Speedy Muffler	1.8	18
Crisco Oil	1.8	18
2nd Debut	1.5	15
Spic & Span	1.4	14
Molson's	1.4	14
Thong Bathing Suit	1.4	14
Stay Free	1.3	13
All	1.3	13
Mary Brown Chicken Legs	1.1	11
Clairol Loving Care	1.1	11



	%	N = 1016
Geritol	1.1	11
Modess	1.0	10
Ajax	1.0	10
Loblaws	1.0	10
International Women's Year Advertising Campaign (Buttons & Ads)	1.0	10

A better indication of the subjects of objectionable advertising is obtained when the products mentioned are grouped into categories according to their type. The following table shows that laundry and dishwashing products (including fabric softeners as well as detergents) are the subject of the most frequently offensive ads, followed by feminine sanitary products (deodorant sprays as well as napkins and tampons) and personal apparel products (brassieres, girdles, pantyhose):

**Table 2**

**Types of products most frequently cited as subject of objectionable ads.**

All products/stores/services mentioned	= 294
	%
Laundry & Dishwashing	8.2
Feminine/Sanitary	6.9
Personal Apparel	6.0
Hair & Beauty Care	5.5
Household Cleaners	5.4
Cigarettes	5.0
Retail Stores	2.6
Cars	2.5

For a list of all 294 products, stores, and services identified as the subject of objectionable ads, see the Appendix.

# What do women find objectionable in advertising?

In general, what women object to most in advertising is the portrayal of women in a stereotyped and/or degrading fashion. They are tired of ads which imply that a woman's place is only in the home, that her only work is housework, and her only worth how well she does this housework. They are fed up with commercials which convey and strengthen common clichés about women, such as the one that a woman is only interested in 'getting her man', and once she has him that she must be content to serve him and their children faithfully without regard to her own life, talents, or interests. They are especially disgusted with the way women are so frequently shown in advertising as ignorant and unsure of themselves, needing male advice and approval for everything they do or buy or wear. They resent ads which use women as sex objects to sell their products, or suggest that women **must** use their products to be attractive enough to interest a man. Many women are also embarrassed and offended by commercials and billboards which advertise personal women's products in such a public manner (and, they note, no men's products are given similar widespread exposure). In all these ways, they feel that advertisers are being unfair to women and demonstrating a lack of respect for women as individuals and as a group.

The following table summarizes the complaints women had about the advertising they monitored in this survey. In many instances, their reasons for objecting to a particular advertisement overlapped categories, and it proved difficult in analyzing their comments to assign each complaint to one category instead of another. On the other hand, not all women were offended by the same things. Nevertheless, this table should give a fair indication of the relative occurrence of each 'offence' mentioned in the 1016 monitoring forms analyzed.

✓ **Table 3**

## **Respondents' assessment of offensive aspect of advertisement**

	% of all objections
Stereotyping or demeaning the female role	33
Intellectually patronizing or insulting	30
Sex-linked portrayal (woman as sex object or obsessed with her own physical attractiveness)	22
Invasion of privacy (public exposure of intimate products)	8
Misleading advertising (in general)	4
All other complaints	3
	100



## Stereotyping or demeaning the female role

These complaints refer to ads which suggest — either explicitly or implicitly — that there is only one role for women in our society (that of housewife) and that it is the inevitable and proper destiny of every female. A commercial for Crisco Oil, for example, shows a girl in her late teens cooking dinner for her family and fiancé, while the father stresses to the fiancé that ‘good cooks make good brides’. One woman assessing this ad comments, *“I objected to this ad because the future of this girl is involved. . . . It portrayed a rather stereotyped role for a young girl who has no part in the decision of her own future, i.e., no alternative to marriage.”* Another respondent sums up the feelings of many women when she says, *“Advertisements almost always represent tasks of washing and cooking as being in the proper domain of women, and this one (for Fleecy fabric softener) was typical. How will children, forming their ideas of sex roles, ever think that women can be construction workers, university professors, or carpenters, if they continually see ads such as this?”*

In contrast, according to many ads, the proper pursuits of men (and boys) always take them **outside** the home where they engage in interesting and exciting activities to the exclusion of females. A newspaper ad for Ontario Hydro which appeared in the Toronto Star in January, 1975, followed this pattern by showing a male Hydro employee, complete with clipboard, visiting an industrial concern to ‘discuss’ with the president the conservation of energy. The second photograph in the ad shows a housewife sitting passively at her kitchen table reading a booklet which ‘tells’ her how to conserve electricity ‘too’. The respondent who sent in this ad comments, *“The all-too-prevalent notion of males ‘doing business’ contrasted with the insipid, necessarily-content-in-the-kitchen female. . . . is disgustingly insulting to women, even those married to their kitchen!”* The housewife doesn’t, of course, have the privilege of ‘discussing’ energy conservation, and (as always) quietly accepts being **told** what to do.

The aspect of such ads that most infuriates women is that it is rarely suggested that both sorts of roles or activities are possible for both sexes. Instead, the ads inevitably indicate that men and boys have no part to play in household tasks, but that women must always serve their menfolk (and children) in this way.

Commercials for two rather different products (Geritol and Vaseline Intensive Care hand lotion) come in for criticism in this regard. In both cases, a husband recites all the domestic tasks his wife has to do all day as ‘proof’ that she of course requires the product being advertised. There is no suggestion that the husband could be helping his wife around the house, and in fact the implication is that the wife **owes** her husband these services,

especially in the line in the Geritol commercial 'My wife, I think I'll keep her'. Comments one respondent, *"I guess we should be grateful he'll keep her for now, but she'd better stay in line — or else!"* With regard to the Vaseline commercial, one woman says, *"That wife could use an extra pair of hands to share the work-load — not hand lotion."*

In a similar vein: *"Why do mothers always get stuck washing things inconsiderate husbands and sons get dirty?"* asks one woman in reference to a commercial for Tide laundry detergent. *"And why are there no 'active, dirty daughters'?"*

Another woman, complaining about an Ivory dishwashing liquid commercial, asks, *"Why didn't the mother explain it to her son instead of her daughter?"*

On the other hand, according to the ads, women are expected to serve their men and children cheerfully, and to **enjoy** the household tasks which are their lot. A Downy fabric softener commercial is criticized for showing a small girl playing bride with a towel for a veil while her mother 'blathers on' (according to one respondent) about how fantastically soft Downy has made this towel. *"It casts a four-year old as a potential bride, thus programming the female into feeling marriage is essential and inevitable. It also includes the ubiquitous grinning housewife, rhapsodizing over some aspect of household routine."* Another respondent complains, *"Why do they always try to make housework look like such fun? It's not!"*

Referring to a Betty Crocker Snackin Cake commercial: *"I cannot imagine any woman I know making a cake in the middle of a forest, even the ultra-domesticated ones. Anyone who spends a vacation baking cakes in the wilds while everyone else buggers off for a good time just isn't real. I would never buy this product or any other by that company."*

A Colgate MFP commercial showing a family group on a sailboat and ending — 'After all, we brought Mom along' brought this comment: *"Mom sounds like the family dog."*

In short, what women are objecting to time and again is the way advertising depicts woman's role as so predetermined and confining that there is no scope for women to do anything other than what is traditionally regarded as 'women's work'. If no alternatives to traditional roles are presented, it makes it all the more difficult for women to break away from these roles and try something new. More than that, the fact that many women are doing precisely that, is virtually ignored in most advertising, for women are rarely shown involved in activities or occupations outside the home, or if they are, these are almost invariably traditionally female jobs such as secretary, teacher, or nurse.



## Intellectually patronizing or insulting

What probably incenses Ontario women more than any other thing is the portrayal of women in advertising as stupid or incapable of any knowledge or expertise in their own right. They find this especially ludicrous when many of the ads which depict women in this way are for products used exclusively or bought predominantly by women, yet it is always a man who gives the instructions or demonstrates the superiority of the product. The exasperation women feel with regard to this situation is evident in the following comments on various advertisements:

Referring to an Ajax commercial: *"Most men don't know the difference between sink cleanser and detergent! . . . Men always get the good lines in commercials. There must be a special school where they learn how to speak in such a patronizing way. ECHHH!"*

*"The man (in an Oxydol commercial) is kindly talking down to the benighted housewife who wouldn't be able to distinguish soap from powdered milk (no doubt!) without his superior wisdom."*

In a Kraft cheese commercial: *"The implication is that if he (that velvet male voice in the background) was not there to tell her how to do it, she'd never be able to cook! . . . Please stop insulting me — I know how to grate cheese! . . . Enough! Enough!"*

In a commercial for Glad kitchen bags: *"The housewife is portrayed as frazzled and bitchy. Men get all the good lines. Mr. Glad arrives just in time to save the day. He — and all the others like him — is getting sickening!"*

Referring to a Kleen & Shine commercial: *"I'm fed up with these sultry male voices telling me what to buy and why. They don't know."*

A typical comment on the milk commercials — the most frequently mentioned offensive commercial. *"Insulting and patronizing to have this smooth 'jock' talking about women like so much beef on the hoof to be physically judged and admired — all because they drink milk. Makes me want to throw up . . . milk and all."*

The 'dumb blonde' in the Speedy Muffler King commercial offended many women: *"Depicting women as simpering idiots, willing to accept any sales pitch as long as it is delivered unctiously . . . At Speedy you're a Nobody — just another sucker."*

An Alpo dog food commercial, in which a husband reprimands his wife (who is apparently incapable of reading and understanding label ingredients for herself) for buying an inferior brand, comes in for particular criticism in this regard. Indeed, this commercial was one of the top five most offensive ads identified in the survey:

*"If she can't be trusted to purchase dog food, God help the rest of her family."*

*"Portrays the woman as childish, weak, subservient. The man is seen as father-like and instructive. Sickening ad!"*

*"It implies that women buy what is cheapest without regard for, or knowledge of, nutritional value. Most women are far more aware of nutrition than men."*

*"The wife has apparently had a frontal lobotomy and cannot read, understand print, or feed the dog without male help."*

Even when no male is present in a commercial (in person or as background voice), the females are frequently portrayed as simply silly. In a commercial for Prell shampoo, a woman who has recently tried it for the first time gushes 'I guess I fell in love'. The respondent who found this ad objectionable states, *"Shampoo is shampoo & not the second coming nor Rock Hudson. I was embarrassed for her and me, and mad that anyone would want to sell a product in this way."*

Another shampoo commercial, this time for Clairol, offends in a similar way. In this one, two women are talking together but at the same time, and one of them puts a bag over her head to indicate her distress with her hair. *"Women just don't carry on that way"* asserts our respondent. *"Advertisers must have a low opinion about women to put this garbage on the air."*

Similar sentiments were expressed about many of the Playtex commercials. About a bra ad: *"The text of this stupid commercial is inane and makes the two women look like a couple of idiots arguing about what to call this all important garment. Who cares?"*



## Sex-linked portrayal

Advertisements which depict women as sex objects or 'decoration' are another source of consternation to many Ontario women. This sort of advertising suggests that men have no interest in women as people or as individuals, but only in their bodies. Air Jamaica commercials which talk about stewardesses as 'rare birds' and croon 'we make you feel good all over' come in for some scathing comment in this regard:

*"This ad sounds as if it were offering prostitution services from the female stewardesses to the patrons. All versions of this ad are extremely offensive, whether the person verbalizing is male or female."*

Similarly, a magazine ad for Belvedere cigarettes showing a woman wearing a blue denim shirt unbuttoned to breast level is severely criticized by many, and in fact was one of the single most offensive ads in the survey.

*"What are they selling, the woman's body or cigarettes?"*

*"The suggested connection between smoking and wild sexual adventures is insulting."*

*"I really don't know what cigarettes has to do with a woman's breast half hanging out of her shirt. But what really gets me mad is that the previous ad (in the series) also showed a person in a denim shirt, also reaching for a package of Belvedere, but HIS shirt was done up to the neck. I suggest the NEXT ad show HIM reaching for a package in his front hip pocket with his fly open."*

One respondent sums up the disgust many women feel toward this type of ad with the following complaint:

*"I am tired of seeing near-naked women displayed indiscriminately on billboards, on TV, in newspapers, etc. It numbs the mind to the point that you get the feeling it is the woman being sold, not any product she is wearing, holding, etc. There is not an equivalent situation in which men's bodies are exploited so ruthlessly. I object!"*

Another type of sex-linked ad which women find offensive is the kind which suggests that the product being advertised will give the user instant sex-appeal. The cumulative effect of such ads gives the impression that women cannot possibly be loved or appreciated for their own qualities or personalities, but that it is the hair dye or the make-up or the pantyhose or the brassiere which makes them attractive enough to interest a man.

*"I find all ads repulsive when they imply that to be sexually attractive one must use Brand X. Such unrealistic portrayal must surely convey a very strange view of personal worth to young people."*

The Certs commercial which says, "If he kissed you once, he'll kiss you again" is one example of this sort of thing:

*"Sex is so cheapened by trashy ads like this. You've got to be kissable, huggable, lovable so boys will take notice of you — not because of what you are or do, but because of what you look like, smell like, taste like, etc."*

So is the commercial for Nice and Easy hair colouring which shows a woman running slowly away from a man, then hiding in a chair until he finds her. Observes one respondent about this ad,

*"It portrays a woman as a silly, childlike creature who will do anything to lure a man her way. She says that the colour rinse or dye 'lets me be me'. That's ridiculous! If she really wanted to be herself, she wouldn't be dyeing her hair!"*

Perhaps the most annoying thing about these sorts of ads is that they reinforce the common idea in our culture that physical attractiveness is of utmost importance to a woman, while for a man it is what he is or does that counts. This idealizing of beauty also leads to the extreme emphasis on the desirability of youthfulness which is so prevalent in advertising. Although it is never suggested that aging is detrimental to a man (more often the implication is that it adds 'character' or 'maturity'), aging is depicted as destroying the attractiveness of women and thus rendering them near useless, and loveless, in our society. The ad for 2nd Debut make-up in which a husband is proud his over-40 wife can pass for 32, is a prime example of this.

*"The usual sickening, boring, and insulting emphasis on how the female looks, stressing this as a matter of critical importance, rather than what she does. Men are always the doers, women just decorate the scene. Would a man use a cream to look 32 and be proud of it?"*

Still another aspect of such advertising which bothers some women is the way it portrays women as dissatisfied and embarrassed with their real selves, obsessed with their bodily functions and physical attractiveness beyond the bounds of reality.

*"I do not need FDS vaginal spray to 'help my mind make peace with my body' (as the ad states). My mind has better things to worry about, and if it doesn't, a little spray isn't going to solve my problems".*



## **Invasion of Privacy**

The heavy degree and prominence of advertising for personal products such as sanitary napkins, feminine deodorant spray, douches, or even brassieres and girdles is offensive to quite a number of women.

*"It is very unfair to have these items (feminine hygiene products) mentioned when males are present — which is often! Is nothing sacred to the money grabbers?? This is very degrading to women and must be stopped!"*

*"I don't like to see ads for women's underwear on TV...I would object just as much as a man parading around in his undershorts."*

*"I object to ads of such a personal nature (sanitary napkins) being advertised on television. There's just too much emphasis put on women's sex and personal needs. I'm fed up with it and refuse to buy these products so advertised."*

It is not only the fact that these products are being advertised which disturbs those women who find it objectionable, but the fact that they are advertised on television with apparently no regard for the programme or time of day. One respondent underscores this point as follows:

*"This ad (for sanitary napkins) came on as the first commercial in the Sunday night movie, at 7:10 p.m. Our entire family was watching. We are embarrassed by these ads and feel they are in poor taste and in very bad time slots. Such ads leave no privacy in a woman's life."*

The general consensus among women complaining about this sort of advertising is that it should be confined to women's magazines and has no place on television, radio, billboards, or transit vehicle placards.

# What does all this mean?

## Council's assessment of the survey results

Taken on an individual basis, the complaints against advertising collected in this survey may seem to some people like small, in some cases perhaps even silly, objections. The portrayal of women in advertising in a stereotyped or degrading fashion is so common that many of us — too many of us, in fact — accept it without thinking anything of it. But that is just the problem. In the opinion of the Ontario Status of Women Council, it is the very frequency and proliferation of such advertising that makes it so significant. The more people (particularly young people, forming their ideas of sex roles in our society) see it, the more they are inclined to believe it and accept it as true and inevitable. The cumulative effect of advertising can influence women's and girls' ideas as to how they are supposed to act in our society, at the same time telling men and boys how to view and deal with females. When people constantly see these mass-media images of women solely as homemakers or sex objects, with no further abilities or personalities, it is difficult for either sex to visualize women outside these roles. While the Council certainly does not believe that advertising has created the roles in which it portrays women, it does feel that advertising serves as one of the more powerful forces in our society for their reinforcement.

The results of this survey indicate that many advertisements are not relevant to the changing life-styles (and sex roles) in Canada to-day. Or, if they are relevant to some women (e.g., to those who are satisfied in the homemaker role), they are too often presented in a negative context (i.e., frazzled, insecure homemaker rather than an intelligent manager of a household).

Even if some women do identify with this negative portrayal of women, they are beginning to realize their lives do not have to be like this, and so they start to resent ads which reinforce the confining aspects of their lives. In this regard, the Council believes that advertising has a unique opportunity, through showing women in the most positive light possible, to help women to realize their goals and enhance their lives. Advertising which helps women feel good about themselves will also inevitably benefit the advertisers, both in terms of their products' image and also in terms of sales. It is interesting to note that although 30% of the respondents in our survey had used the product in question before monitoring an objectionable ad, only 1% state they are willing to continue to do so, as a result of the advertisement.

While undoubtedly it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time — and certainly some people will find something objectionable in almost any advertising — the results of this study strongly indicate that it is not just a few advertisers who are producing ads objectionable or offensive to women. Rather, perhaps the majority of advertisers are doing so. This might help explain why so many products apparently sell as well as they do: if everybody (particularly in the same product category) is committing the same sins, the offensive ads do not stand out enough from the rest to affect sales negatively. This study strongly suggests, however, that women are buying these products



**despite** the advertising, rather than because of it, usually because they must buy something in each product category. So many factors go into the successful marketing of a product that it cannot be assumed the product sells well because of the advertising.

Council believes that as more and more advertisers begin to 'tune in' to women's negative attitudes to their old-hat advertising techniques, they will begin to produce ads which portray women more realistically and more acceptably according to contemporary standards and life styles. Some advertisers are already showing women in significant roles outside their homes, with interests and knowledge beyond their roles as homemakers. They are showing men sharing in or even taking over certain domestic chores. They are allowing women to speak authoritatively about the virtues of the advertised products. Gradually these new approaches are the ones which will begin to stand out from the rest because they are so refreshingly different — and more relevant to many women — while advertisers who continue to produce ads portraying women in a stereotyped or demeaning fashion will find that they are the losers.

## What can YOU do — as an individual — to eliminate offensive advertising?

1. 'Tune in' to the underlying messages in commercials and advertisements which depict women or girls. Try to recognize what the ad is implying about the proper role or behaviour of women in our society.
2. If you don't like this underlying message, don't let it pass! Nothing will change if you don't voice your objection. Complain to the manufacturer of the product being advertised. Complain to the television or radio station or publication which carried the ad. If you can find out the name of the advertising agency which created or placed the ad (the station or publication may be willing to help you on this point, if only to get itself 'off the hook'), by all means complain to it as well. Be sure to send a copy of your complaint to the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board, 1240 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, an organization which exerts considerable influence on the type of advertising produced in Canada today.
3. If at all possible, put your complaint in writing (a telephone call is too easy for the intended recipient to avoid) and address it to the highest position (e.g., the president of the company, the general manager of the station, the editor of the publication). Be specific about what aspects of the advertisement you find offensive, and why. Make it clear that unless you receive a satisfactory reply to your letter within two weeks, you intend never to buy the advertised product again. (And do mention it if you have been in the habit of buying the product in the past. No business likes to hear it is about to lose a customer.)
4. Then, carry through with your threat. Stop buying any products which continue to advertise in a manner you find offensive, even if this means finding a substitute you actually like less. But be aware that boycotting alone can have little effect in bringing about the changes you desire unless the advertisers know the reason for it. Otherwise, they may blame a slump in sales (if this should occur) on any of a number of other factors, and the offensive advertising will remain the same.
5. Talk about what you are doing to your friends, neighbours, relatives, colleagues at work, club-mates: in short, everyone you meet. Encourage them to be aware of the images of women portrayed in advertising, and to participate in getting undesirable images changed.
6. Keep the Ontario Status of Women Council, (700 Bay St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1Z6) informed as to your interest and concern in this important area. We are especially interested in your reaction to this report, so that we can make your views known to the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board and other associations representing the advertising industry in Canada.



A collage of various images related to the female body. It includes several photographs of women in different poses, some in swimwear, and a large anatomical diagram of a female torso. There is also a small illustration of a woman in a swimsuit. The collage is arranged in a layered, overlapping fashion.

## What can YOU do — as an advertiser — to eliminate offensive advertising?

1. Examine your current or proposed advertising carefully to determine if it portrays women in a manner which they may find offensive. Refer to the section of this report entitled “What do women find objectionable in advertising?” as a general guideline for what to look for.
2. In conducting advertising research, include specific questions to gauge the reactions of consumers to the way in which women are depicted in the ads in question. Don’t expect this type of reaction to come through spontaneously if you are only looking for the comprehension and believability of the basic message.
3. When a new advertisement or campaign is planned, challenge those responsible for its creation to portray any women in it in a manner in keeping with (if not ahead of) the changing sex roles in contemporary society. Consider the one positive assessment of a commercial (for Nescafe coffee) received in this study. (see opposite page)
4. Some other ideas arising from this study which might be considered:
  - (a) Show women in roles other than (or in addition to) homemaker, in recognition of the fact that over 40% of Canadian women over 18 years of age now work at least part-time outside the home.
  - (b) If you portray a woman as a homemaker, let her be an intelligent manager of her household.
  - (c) Show men (and boys) sharing in household tasks that have been traditionally considered ‘women’s work’.
  - (d) Consider using females for voice-over wherever possible.
  - (e) Show men respecting women’s opinions and ideas.
  - (f) Avoid the implication that women are obsessed with the condition of the laundry, the floor, or their physical appearance. Depict these relatively minor concerns in a more realistic overall context.
  - (g) Let women choose, do, buy, or cook things for their own personal benefit, not just to get the approval of their husbands, children, mothers-in-law, or bosses.
  - (h) Promote personal care products in terms of what they can do for the woman herself, in the context of her lifestyle, interests, or activities, not in terms of providing her with ammunition for catching (or keeping) her man.
  - (i) In advertising personal hygiene products or underwear, take a second look at the proposed medium and time slots. At the very least, try to avoid family viewing times with such commercials. (In Council’s opinion, the only acceptable medium for such advertising is women’s magazines.)



AUDIO/VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Who was selling the product:		MALE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FEMALE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> _____ (specify)
No. of Males	No. of Females	Background Voice MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Specify characters in ad other than human beings, i.e. animals or cartoons.
Briefly describe actions of participants				
2 attractive, middle-aged people come into their kitchen. They are both dressed for work. They co-operate in making breakfast, and both read the paper. They share a quiet smile with each other over coffee. Cheerful background theme-song.				
If Possible, list discernible occupations of participants				
Both seem to be working people - white-collar, I suppose.				

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Briefly describe why you objected to the ad
I like this ad because here are 2 convincing human beings doing something very ordinary and pleasant — there's an easy co-operation, instead of rigid sex-division.
this is what we need. I wanted to remade on this instead of only making complaints.

5. If you are genuinely interested in improving the image of women in advertising, but still confused as to what is or is not offensive, the Ontario Status of Women Council (700 Bay St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1Z6) may be able to assist you. A meeting can be arranged by calling 965-1111.



# Appendix

## Media Identified as sources of objectionable advertising

It should be noted that media which received most frequent mention as carrying objectionable advertising are not necessarily the most offending sources. The relatively high percentages cited for certain radio and television stations, for example, may only mean that these stations are watched or listened to more frequently than other stations. Thus, it is not surprising that those stations and newspapers mentioned more frequently tend to be in the larger cities (i.e., the ones with the most listeners or readers) and that the two magazines receiving most frequent mention are two of the larger circulation periodicals, among women, in Canada. Similarly, the frequent identification of 'movies' and 'news' as programmes during which objectionable advertising appears likely means that these are the sorts of programmes women watch most, not that they necessarily carry more offensive ads than other programmes.

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**Table 4****Medium in which objectionable advertising identified**

Number of ads mentioned = 1016

	%
Television	64
Magazine	12
Newspaper	8
Radio	6
Billboard	6
Other	4

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**Table 5****Television stations on which objectionable advertising identified**

Total mentions of TV stations = 527

	%
CFTO (Metro Toronto)	24.3
CBC "	22.4
GLOBAL "	11.8
CTV (Kitchener)	8.0
CHCH (Hamilton)	7.8
CFPL (London)	5.3
CJOH (Ottawa, Peterborough)	4.2
CBOT (Ottawa)	3.2
CKPR (Thunder Bay, Nipigon)	2.7

The following TV stations each received less than 2% of total mentions:

CKCO	(Kitchener)
CKWS	(Kingston)
CHEX	(Peterborough)
CKLW	(Windsor)
CKSO	(Kapuskasing, Sudbury)
CITY	(Toronto)
CFCL	(Timmins)
CHNO	(Sudbury)
CBC	(Rainy River)
CKNX	(Wingham)
CHFD	(Thunder Bay)
CKVR	(Barrie)
CFCL	(Kapuskasing)

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**Table 6****Radio stations on which  
objectionable advertising  
identified**

Total mentions of radio stations = 54

	%
CFRB (Metro Toronto)	33.3
CBC               "	20.4
CHUM            "	13.0
CKEY            "	13.0

The following radio stations each  
received less than 4% of total  
mentions:

CHML	(Hamilton)
CKFM	(Toronto)
CKAP	(Kapuskasing)
CFJR	(Brockville)
CHLO	(Delhi)
CJBQ	(Belleville)
CHYM	(Kitchener)
CHFI-FM	(Toronto)
CKLB	(Oshawa)
CHOK	(Sarnia)

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**Table 7****Magazines in which  
objectionable advertising  
identified**

Total mentions of publications = 111

	%
Time	24.4
Chatelaine	21.4
Weekend	8.1
Canadian	6.3

The following publications each  
received less than 5% of total  
mentions:

Macleans
Better Homes & Gardens
Homemakers
Readers Digest
Women's Day
Cosmetics (Trade)
Miss Chatelaine
Christmas Magazine
Psychology Today
Ebony
Revue-Moteur
People
Mademoiselle
Golf
Newsweek
Ingenue
Family circle
TV Guide
Canadian Stereo Guide
Durham Region Business & Industry
Toronto Star TV Guide

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**Table 8****Newspapers in which objectionable advertising identified**

Total mentions of newspapers = 81  
%

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Globe & Mail	30.8
Toronto Star	25.9
Ottawa Citizen	11.0
Hamilton Spectator	8.6

The following newspapers each received less than 4% of total mentions:

Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal  
Times-News  
Ottawa Journal  
Sunday Sun  
Financial post  
Ottawa Times  
Guelph Mercury  
Cornwall Daily Standard-  
Freeholder  
Simcoe Reformer  
London Free Press  
Kingston Whig-Standard  
St. Catharines Standard  
Oshawa Times  
Stratford Beacon Herald  
Kitchener-Waterloo Record

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**Table 9****Locations of billboards identified as carrying objectionable advertising**

Total mentions of billboards = 51  
%

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Metro Toronto	74
London	8
Thunder Bay	4
Sault Ste. Marie	4

The following billboard locations each received less than 4% of the total mentions:

Cornwall  
Aurora  
Oakville  
Hamilton  
Ottawa

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**Table 10****Television and Radio Programmes  
on which objectionable advertising  
identified**

Total mentions of programmes = 104

	%
Movie	6.0
News	4.7
Between Programmes	3.4
Shoulder to Shoulder	2.0
All in the Family	1.3
Another World	1.2
Hockey Night in Canada	1.1
M.A.S.H.	1.0
Carol Burnett Show	1.0
Emergency	1.0

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The following programmes each received less than 1% of the mentions.

Police Story	Julie Andrews	Twentieth Century	Rockford Files
Rhoda	Bruce Smith Show	It's a Musical World	Police Surgeon
Mary Tyler Moore	Roberta Flack Special	Noonday News	The Odd Couple
Ironside	Sandford & Son	Ombudsman	Days of Our Lives
Academy Performance	Anything You Can Do	Toronto News	Police Woman
Edge of Night	World Beat	Newsline	Get Christie Love
Lucas Tanner	Irish Rovers	Twenty-four Hours	Inquiry
Hawaii Five-O	Children's Programme	Larry Solway Show	Family Court
Radio & T.V. Station	Smothers Brothers	Family Affair	Larry Henderson
Announcers	Petrocelli	Barnaby Jones	Sierra
Streets of San Francisco	W 5	Happy Days	Starlost
Marcus Welby	Great Debate	Courtship of Eddie's	Kojak
The Waltons	Tommy Hunter Show	Father	Shaft
The Beachcomber	Documentary	Tony Orlando & Dawn	Barbara Frum
Wally Crouter	Cannon	Tattletales	Bill Deegan
Game Show	House of pride	Walt Disney	
Archer	Kolchak	Regional Contact	
Late News	Untamed World	Starlight Serenade	
Bob Newhart	Johnny Carson Show	Under Attack	
This Day	Mannix	Dick Van Dyke Show	
Chico and the Man	MacMillan & Wife	Bill McVean Afternoon Show	
The Jeffersons	The Lucy Show	Million Dollar Lottery Show	
Sh! It's the News	Front Page Challenge	General Hospital	
Maude	Morning Talk Show	Apple's Way	
Excuse My French	Metro Morning	Brady Bunch	
What's The Good Word	Earl Warren Show	John Gilbert Show	
Kung Fu	Come to the Movies	Six Million Dollar Man	

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**Table 11****Products, Stores, and Services cited as subjects of objectionable advertising**

The most frequently mentioned subjects are given in Table I (Section III in the body of this report).

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The following products, stores, or services each received less than 1% of total mentions:

Burgerbits & Beef Bites	Ayds Reducing Plan	Holiday Inn
Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken	Virginia Slims Cigarettes	Softique Bath Oil
Nice & Easy Hair Colour	Benson & Hedges Cigarettes	Jade East
Air Jamaica	Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix	Tabu Perfume
Wisk Detergent	Ivory Liquid	Coffeemate
Kraft Cheese Slices	Liquid Plumber	Prell Shampoo
Easy Off	Ultra Brite Toothpaste	Winegard Mercury & Ford
T. Eaton Co. (Clothing & Hosiery Ads)	Mister Transmission	Bon Ami
Cavalier Cigarettes	Want Ads	Metracal
Calgonite & Calgon	Fleishmann's Margarine	Province of Ontario Tourist Film
Bright Side Shampoo	Glad Kitchen Bags	Astro Shield
Feminine Hygiene Products, F.D.S.	Sunoco	Lux Liquid
Downy Fabric Softener	One A Day Iron & Vitamin Pills	Canadian Tire Co. — Floor Tiles
Colgate MFP	Kleen & Shine	Culligan Water Conditioner
Cascade Dishwasher Detergent	Vicks Formula 44D	Sonora Peach Nut Oil
Palmolive Liquid	Noxema	Draino
Chanel No. 5	Right Guard / Foot Guard	Maxwell House Coffee
Sears Sale	Comet	Turtles
Chevrolet	Close Up Toothpaste	Flintstones & Chocks
Timex	Bob Bannerman Motors (American Motors)	Vitamins
Tide	Lysol Spray	Johnson's Baby Oil
Oxydol	Food City — Meat & Chicken	Chrysler
Fleecy	Tampax	Betty Crocker
Josten's Rings	D.G.S. Group — Personnel Consultants	Viking
Saran Wrap	Vaseline Care Hand Lotion	Bell Canada
Joy	Hanes Nylons	Imperial Margarine
Pamper Diapers	Mr. Clean	Gordon's Gin
Neet	Confidets	Absorbine Junior
Oil of Olay	Breck Shampoo	Seagrams
Sunlight	Volvo	Certs Breath Mints
Monarch Margarine	Punch	Mattel's Knit Magic
Ford Mercury Cougar	Mop & Glo	Kotex
Oldsmobile	Woolco	Zero
Secret Super Dry Deodorant	Sun Flight — ABC	Ontario Hydro
Shake & Bake	Yardley Sea Mist & Bronzetan Cosmetics & Cachet	Simpsons' Department Store
Lady Grecian Hair Colouring	Green & Ross Tires	Skyline Hotels
J. Cloth	Mr. Muscle Oven Cleaner	Wonder Bra
Bacardi Rum	Seeburg	Wonder Books
Dristan	Pledge	Duncan Hines
Vita Bath	Triumph TR6	Labatt's Beer
Coca Cola		Purina Dog Food
		Maple Leaf Tenderflake Lard
		Nestles Quik



Leon's Furniture	Max Factor Eye Shadow	Handywrap
Mini Gym	EstogERICA	Westinghouse Self-Cleaning
Protein 21 Shampoo	Cover Girl Mascara	Oven
Sunglasses — Thorncliffe	Daisy Fresh Bra	Black Velvet Whisky
Shopping Centre	Participaction	Bedford Industries Toy
Arrid Extra Dry Deodorant	Gain Detergent	Packaging
Heinz Tomato Sauce	Royal Bank	Hyatt Regency
Canadian Armed Forces	Dominion	Redpath & Olympic Athletes
Hotel Accommodation	Miracle Mart	Kleenex
Airport Hilton	Dentine Gum	Premium Readers Club &
Bank of Nova Scotia	Simulated Diamond Ring	Cookbook
Savings Adv.	Mark Eden Bust Developer	Spray 'N Wash
Real Estate Ads	Abortion (anti)	Whisper Pantyhose
Movie of the Month Prize on	Dow Oven Cleaner	Dodds Kidney Pills
local radio	Viceroy	Babies Only Please
Montgomery Ward Mattress	Crazy Glue	Compoz
Jose Cuervo Tequila	Mercury	L'Oreal Hair Colouring
Nanimex	Prestolite	CN-CP Telecommunications
Barries Furriers	TAS Communications	Skinny Dip
Matador Fitness Centre	Service	Sunshine Girl
Kimbies	Dainty Bol	Dolan Automotive Services
Halls Pro Hardware	Midol	Aamco Transmissions
Contac Cold Pills	Kelly Girl (Office Help)	Public Health Ad
Anacin	I.B.M. Photocopier	GSW Home Service
Canada Manpower Service	Winston Cigarettes	Taste Keepers
British Airways	Revenue Canada (Tax on Air	Freedoms
Alberto Balsam	Travel)	Hertz Car Rentals
Futura	Mecca	Love's Baby Soft
NyQuil	Northern Electric	Mop Magic
Mr. Submarine	Turkey Producers	Diet Pepsi
Kayser	Beatrice Fruit Bottom Yogurt	Kraft Miracle Whip
Puerto Rican Rum	Lady Schick	Westinghouse (Refrigerator)
Bowater Canadian Ltd.	Lee's Jeans	Seeburg
Ada Mackenzie Shops	Sony Dictating/Transc.	Borg Textiles
General Mills	Machines	Five Roses Flour
Kelloggs	Dale Carnegie Course	Chevelle
Imperial Oil Esso Products	Nine Lives Cat Food	Austin Marina
Mission Millions Possible	Campbell Soups	Lipton Soup
Collegiate Sports	Sound Power (stereo	Tums
K-Tel	components)	Ethan Allen Galleries
Gregory System for Hair	McGill University Ad	Fisher Price Toys
Removal	Harveys	Serta
Weight Watchers	Tic Tac Mints	Gulf Heating System
Teacher's Scotch	Dial Deodorant	Carlsberg Beer
Cosmo Girl Face & Figure	Listerine	Midas Muffler
Salon	World of Beauty Club	Tegrin
Orlane	The Bundler	Cars
Rita Mansfield Modelling &	Armco Building Systems	The Bay
Finishing School	Nails 'N Lashes	K-Mart
Soft 'N Dry	Bonanza Steaks	Minute Rice
Formfit	Living Lighting	Clorox
No More Tangles	House of Teak Furniture	Folger's Coffee
MacDonalds	Show	
T.W. Clean	Dominion Textiles Ltd.	
Sominex	Towers Sale	
Manhandler Beans	Fisher-Price Toys	



Secretariat for  
Social  
Development

Ontario

416/965- 1111

Queen's Park  
Toronto Ontario

Status of

Women Council  
801 Bay Street, 3rd Fl.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 1Z1

### MONITORING - STAGE TWO

Are you satisfied with the way in which women are portrayed in advertising? Do you object to women being shown as stupid or a sex object or both? Do you think there is nothing wrong with the manner in which women are depicted? We want your views.

The Ontario Status of Women Council invites you to participate in STAGE TWO of our monitoring programme taking place through the month of January, 1975.

We are counting on you to provide us with the information we need to go to the Advertising Standards Council and the offending advertising agencies to demand the elimination of discrimination by sex in advertising.

You can help by jotting down your thoughts on advertisements while viewing Canadian T.V., listening to the radio, reading Canadian publications, and taking notice of billboards and placards. Use the form on the back of this letter as the easiest way to record your views. These forms may be reproduced if necessary. May we suggest that, alone or with friends, you spend one hour on T.V. commercials, one hour on radio, one hour on newspapers and magazines. When out walking or driving, or on public transit, observe billboards and placards.

YOUR CO-OPERATION IS THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR OPINIONS. YOU CAN BE ASSURED THEY WILL FORM PART OF THE FINAL REPORT.



Ontario

# ONTARIO STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL

LAURA SABIA,  
CHAIRWOMAN

## ADVERTISING MONITORING

A) Please Print

Instructions: B) Complete a Separate Form for each advertisement

C) Complete forms should be returned to:

STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL  
801 BAY STREET, 3rd. FLOOR  
TORONTO, M5S 1Z1

CATEGORY - indicate by (✓).

Date of show or publication  
Day Month Year

Canadian Television <input type="checkbox"/>	Radio <input type="checkbox"/>	Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/>	Magazine <input type="checkbox"/>	Billboard <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/> (specify) _____
T.V./Radio Station or Publication Name			Program Name		
Billboard Location	Street				

### PRODUCT INFORMATION

Brand Name	Have you previously used the product? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Would you use the product as a result of the advertisement?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

### AUDIO/VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Who was selling the product: MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> (specify) _____			
No. of Males	No. of Females	Background Voice MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/>	Specify characters in ad other than human beings, i.e. animals or cartoons.
Briefly describe actions of participants			
If Possible, list discernible occupations of participants			

### PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Briefly describe why you objected to the ad			
Did the ad discriminate against any of the following?			
AGE <input type="checkbox"/>	SEX <input type="checkbox"/>	RACE <input type="checkbox"/>	COLOUR <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION <input type="checkbox"/> MARITAL STATUS <input type="checkbox"/>
City in which you reside			
Did you make a formal complaint by LETTER <input type="checkbox"/> by PHONE <input type="checkbox"/>			
To whom? SPONSOR <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLICATION <input type="checkbox"/> RADIO/T.V. STATION <input type="checkbox"/>			
WHERE POSSIBLE, PLEASE ATTACH COPY OF AD			



## Locations of Respondents

Aroland  
Ajax  
Aurora  
Barrie  
Belleville  
Brantford  
Brockville  
Brooklin  
Burlington  
Caledon East  
Campbellville  
Chapleau  
Chatham  
Cobourg  
Copper Cliff  
Cornwall  
Delhi  
Dunnville  
Durham  
Fergus  
Fonthill  
Georgetown  
Guelph  
Hamilton  
Ingersoll  
Ingleside  
Jerseyville  
Kapusking  
Kemptville  
Kincardine  
Kingston  
Kitchener  
Leamington  
Lindsay  
London  
Maple  
Metro Toronto  
Mildmay  
Milton

Nakina  
Newmarket  
Niagara-on-the-Lake  
Nipigon  
Oakville  
Oshawa  
Ottawa  
Peterborough  
Port Dover  
Rainy River  
Red Rock  
Rexdale  
Ridgetown  
Sarnia  
Sault Ste. Marie  
Simcoe  
Smooth Rock Falls  
St. Catharines  
Stoney Creek  
Stratford  
Sudbury  
Thornhill  
Thunder Bay  
Timmins  
Tweed  
Walkerton  
Waterloo  
West Lincoln  
Weston  
Whitevale  
Winchester  
Windsor  
Wingham



3 1761 11546548 6

Second in a series of reports aimed at improving the status of women in Ontario.

**About Face**

Towards a positive image of women in textbooks

**Volte-Face**

Vers une image positive de la femme dans les manuels scolaires

**About Face II**

Towards a positive image of women in advertising

**About Face III**

Towards a positive image of women in sport

**About Face IV**

Is anybody out there listening?

**About Face V**

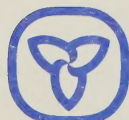
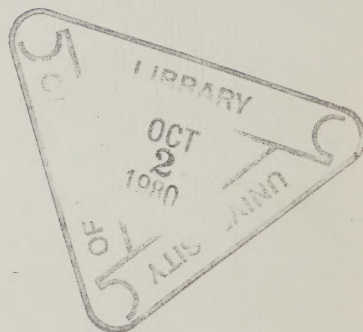
Towards a positive image of housewives

**Volte-Face**

Vers une image nouvelle de la femme au foyer

**About Face VI**

Towards a positive image of women and health



Ontario

Secretariat  
for  
Social Development